

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

Draft Environmental Assessment and Finding of No Significant Impact

**East Park Reservoir Fire Management Plan
Orland Project
Colusa County, California**



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Northern California Area Office**

April 2, 2007

**DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF A FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN, EAST PARK RESERVOIR,
COLUSA COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Responsible Parties:

Lead Agency: Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation, Mid-Pacific Region
Northern California Area Office, Shasta Lake, California
Brian Person, Area Manager

Cooperating Agency: California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
Napa-Sonoma-Lake Unit, Battalion 1419
1199 Big Tree Road, St. Helena, California 94574
Mark Rayna, Battalion Chief

Proposed Action

Reclamation proposes to implement a Fire Management Plan at East Park Reservoir in Colusa County, California for the purpose of meeting Department of the Interior guidelines and to guide a range of fire management activities permitted by policy at East Park Reservoir for a 10-year period. The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) has an agreement with Reclamation to conduct fire suppression and, together with other fire management agencies, can conduct prescribed fire activities to be conducted according to the FMP.

Contacts

For further information regarding this Environmental Assessment, please contact the following individuals:

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Comments

Written comments regarding this action are due 14 days from the date defined in the press release and may be sent to:

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U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation
Mid-Pacific Region
Northern California Area Office
Shasta Lake, California

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Implementation of a Fire Management Plan
at East Park Reservoir by the Bureau of Reclamation
in Cooperation With the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection
and Other Fire Management Agencies

FONSI No. _____

Recommended: Basia Trout
Natural Resource Specialist
Northern California Area Office
Date

Concur: Buford Holt
Environmental Specialist
Northern California Area Office
Date

Approved: Brian Person
Area Manager
Northern California Area Office
Date

DRAFT FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

Background

The Bureau of Reclamation has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the effects of implementing a Fire Management Plan (FMP) at East Park Reservoir, Colusa County, California.

The purpose of implementing the FMP is to meet Department of the Interior directives and to guide a range of fire management activities permitted by policy at East Park Reservoir for a 10-year period.

The proposed action is for the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) to perform fire management activities at East Park Reservoir in accordance with the current agreement between Reclamation and CDF, this FMP, operating plans for fire suppression, and individually prepared and approved fire burn plans for prescribed fires that may be conducted by CDF or other fire management agencies, such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. All fire management activities will be in accordance with Reclamation's, CDF's, and other fire management agencies' current safety standards. A contingency plan for uncontained fire will be in place.

Findings

In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended, the Northern California Area Office, Mid-Pacific Region, Bureau of Reclamation finds that the proposed action is not a major Federal action that would significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is therefore not required for implementation of the proposed action.

This Finding of No Significant Impact is based on the following:

1. There would be no effects on federally-listed threatened or endangered species.
2. The FMP will not have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
3. Impacts to physical, biological, and socio-economic aspects of the terrestrial environment would be absent or, where present, would be minor due to temporary changes in air quality and degraded aesthetics due to burn residue prior to regrowth. Water quality would not be affected.

**Draft Environmental Assessment for
Implementation of a Fire Management Plan
at
East Park Reservoir, Colusa County, California
in Cooperation with the
California Department of Forestry and Fire protection
and Other Fire Management Agencies**

PURPOSE AND NEED

The Department of the Interior Department Manual (620 DM 1.4B, effective date 4/10/98) states: “Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management Plan. Fire management plans must be consistent with firefighter and public safety; values to be protected; land, natural, and cultural resource management plans; and must address public health issues. Fire management plans must also address all potential wildland fire occurrences and include the full range of wildland fire management actions. Bureau of Reclamation fire management plans must be coordinated, reviewed, and approved by responsible agency administrators to insure consistency with approved land management plans.”

This Fire Management Plan (FMP) is being developed to guide a range of fire management activities permitted by policy at East Park Reservoir, Colusa County, California for a 10-year period. The FMP emphasizes a program using fire suppression and prescribed fire activities. The FMP is intended to reduce hazards on East Park Reservoir’s Reclamation lands and to provide resource management benefits as described in, and tiered off of, the East Park Reservoir Resource Management Plan (RMP)/Environmental Assessment (EA). With the completion of the FMP, East Park Reservoir’s fire management program would employ a variety of activities with the assistance of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF) and other fire management agencies where appropriate to accomplish land and resource management objectives and to reduce the risk of unwanted fire in and adjacent to East Park.

PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

Proposed Action:

The proposed action is for Reclamation to implement an FMP to guide fire management activities. Wildland fires will be aggressively controlled under the constraints of a general operating plan and this FMP, using minimum impact suppression tactics unless there is imminent danger to life or property. Heavy equipment will not be allowed in riparian or wetland areas unless there is an immediate threat to human life or property or approved by a resource advisor on a case-by-case basis.

Prescribed fire activities will be conducted in accordance with this FMP and individual burn plans. Prescribed fires are desired to (1) enhance habitat by removing excess plant litter, (2) reduce the fuel load for pre-fire protection, and (3) control invasive weeds to encourage native perennial grass growth. Heavy equipment will not be allowed in riparian areas unless approved by a resource advisor on a case-by-case basis.

For an FMP to be covered under this EA, the FMP must:

1. Not have a significant effect on the quality of human environment.
2. Not involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources.
3. Not have significant adverse effects on public health or safety.
4. Not have an adverse effect on unique geological features such as wetlands, wild or scenic rivers, refuges, floodplains, rivers placed on the nationwide river inventory, or prime or unique farmlands.
5. Not have highly controversial environmental effects.
6. Not have highly uncertain environmental effects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks.
7. Not establish a precedent for future actions.
8. Not be related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulative significant environmental effects.
9. Not affect properties listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historical Places.
10. Not threaten to violate Federal, state, local or Tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment.
11. Not adversely affect a species listed or proposed to be listed as endangered or threatened.

No Action:

The no-action alternative would consist of CDFs continued ability to conduct control of wildfires with no constrictions or constraints by Reclamation and with no operating plan. Prescribed burns would not be allowed, as individual burn plans could not be prepared without an approved FMP.

AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Physical Resources:

No impacts associated with water or air quality are anticipated as a result of implementing the FMP other than temporary minor decreases in air quality when wildfires exist or prescribed burns are conducted. Water quality will not be affected as the techniques used in fire management would be minimally invasive to the environment, i.e., fuel used in the drip torches would burn off immediately, leaving no residue. Heavy equipment would not be allowed in riparian areas unless approved on a case-by-case basis by a resource advisor or when there is imminent danger to human life or property. The FMP would not have an adverse affect on unique geological features such as wetlands, wild or scenic rivers, refuges, floodplains, rivers placed on the nationwide river inventory, or prime or unique farmlands. Prescribed fires would improve wetland habitats for sensitive species and enhance the rangeland.

Biological Resources:

No negative impacts to plants or wildlife are anticipated from wildlife suppression activities as the effects of the FMP wildfire suppression activities would be temporary in nature, reduce the threat to plants or wildlife as a result of wildland fires, and the operating plan would provide constrictions to protect the sensitive areas as much as possible, unless there was imminent threat to life and property. No negative impacts to plants or wildlife are anticipated as a result of prescribed fire activities as the FMP-prescribed fire activities will be conducted under individual burn plans and at a time that plants are dormant and wildlife such as waterfowl/wetland bird species/raptors and tule elk and deer species are in the pre-nesting/pre-birthing season. Prescribed fires would be used to enhance habitat for wildlife.

Steps would be taken to ensure no species listed or proposed to be listed as endangered or threatened would be affected by fire suppression or prescribed fire activities. Currently, the only listed species known to occur in the area is the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), and prescribed burns would occur outside of the nesting season and would protect identified nesting trees. Fire suppression activities would occur as quickly as possible in the areas of the nesting trees. Nesting trees would be identified to the fire management agencies in the operating plan as an area to be protected.

Cultural Resources:

East Park Dam was completed in 1910 as a component of the Orland Project, the first Reclamation project in California. The dam holds a reservoir capacity of approximately 52,000 acre-feet and stores surplus water for irrigation purposes. The minimum pool requirement for East Park Reservoir is 5,000 acre-feet. Releases and spills from the reservoir flow down Stony Creek for storage in Stony Gorge Reservoir, approximately 18 miles downstream. The dam is a concrete, arch-gravity structure with a height of 138 feet and a crest length of 266 feet.

The proposed preferred alternative to adopt the fire management plan for East Park Reservoir has no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1). See Appendix B.

Indian Trust Assets:

The United States has a trust responsibility to protect and maintain rights reserved by, or granted to, federally-recognized Tribes and individual Indians by treaties, statutes, and executive orders.

These rights are sometimes further interpreted through court decisions and regulations. The trust responsibility requires that all Federal agencies, including Reclamation, take all actions reasonably necessary to protect Indian trust assets (Reclamation 1994, Reclamation 1993).

Indian trust assets are legal interests in property held in trust by the Federal Government for federally-recognized Indian Tribes or individual Indians. "Assets" are anything owned that has monetary value. "Legal interest" means there is a property interest for which there is a legal remedy such as compensation or injunction, if there is improper interference. Indian trust assets do not include things in which a Tribe or individual Indians have no legal interest (Reclamation 1994, Reclamation 1993).

Indian trust assets can be real property, physical assets, or intangible property rights such as a lease or a right to use something. Indian trust assets cannot be sold, leased, or otherwise alienated without approval of the United States. While most Indian trust assets are located on-reservation, they can also be located off-reservation. Examples of things that can be Indian trust assets are land, minerals, hunting and fishing rights, water rights, and instream flows. Off-reservation cultural resources located on non-trust land are usually not Indian trust assets (Reclamation 1994, Reclamation 1993).

The nearest Indian trust assets to this proposed action are located on 120 acres held in trust by the United States for Grindstone Indian Rancheria, located approximately 20 miles north of East Park Dam. Stony Creek flows through the Grindstone Rancheria from west to east.

No Federal, state, local, or Tribal law or requirements imposed for protection of the environment would be violated.

Socio-Economic Resources:

The FMP would not have a significant affect on the quality of human environment, involve unresolved conflicts concerning alternative uses of available resources, or have significant adverse affects on public health or safety. The area has no major metropolitan areas. The small communities of Lodoga and Stonyford and communities such as Century Ranch and individual ranches are located nearby. Air quality will be affected temporarily during wildfires and during prescribed burns. Aesthetics will be temporarily degraded as the burned vegetation is replaced with regrowth. Any prescribed burns would be authorized under specific conditions set by the Air Quality Board/County Air Pollution Control District and CDF or other fire management

regulations. Water quality would not be affected as the constraints to use of heavy equipment would be in place.

The FMP is consistent with the Department and CDF safety and environmental guidelines and will not preferentially favor nor discriminate against any socio-economic group.

Project Operations:

Reclamation has determined that there would be no identifiable impacts to the Orland Project or Central Valley Project (CVP) operations as a result of the FMP. Therefore, no impacts associated with water delivery or other impacts to Orland Project or CVP operations are anticipated.

Cumulative Impacts:

The FMP will not establish a precedent for future actions. Wildfire suppression will use an aggressive approach with constraints dependent on the wildfire conditions. Similar actions may be used at different areas of the reservoir should monitoring the effects of individual prescribed burns indicate an increase in habitat quality. Prescribed fires may be repeated once the vegetation returns to a decadent stage. The FMP would not have highly controversial or uncertain environmental affects or involve unique or unknown environmental risks, nor would it be related to other actions with individually insignificant but cumulatively significant environmental affects.

CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

This EA was prepared in consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) by accessing their database regarding species in the East Park Reservoir area (Lodoga and Gilmore Peak Quadrangles) that may be listed as endangered or threatened. No species listed as endangered or threatened in the East Park area are known to occur except for the bald eagle. The Service has responsibility for enforcement of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) for species other than marine mammals and anadromous fish.

Review of the California Natural Diversity Database Rarefind 3 reveals the bald eagle as the only listed species in the vicinity of the East Park area.

Because Black Butte Dam and other facilities block the creek at several locations from the Sacramento River, no listed anadromous species are in the vicinity and no consultation with the National Marine Fisheries Service pursuant to section 7 of the ESA was required.

Appendix A

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Species List for East Park Reservoir Lodoga and Gilmore Peak Quads

Sacramento U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office

**Federal Endangered and Threatened Species
that Occur in or may be Affected by Projects in the
LODOGA (563C)
U.S.G.S. 7 1/2 Minute Quad**

Database Last Updated: December 1, 2006

Document Number: 061208125715

Species of Concern - The Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office no longer maintains a list of species of concern. However, various other agencies and organizations maintain lists of at-risk species. These lists provide essential information for land management planning and conservation efforts. See www.fws.gov/sacramento/es/spp_concern.htm for more information and links to these sensitive species lists.

Red-Legged Frog Critical Habitat - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has designated final critical habitat for the California red-legged frog. The designation became final on May 15, 2006. See our [map index](#).

Listed Species

Invertebrates

Branchinecta lynchi

vernal pool fairy shrimp (T)

Desmocerus californicus dimorphus

valley elderberry longhorn beetle (T)

Fish

Hypomesus transpacificus

delta smelt (T)

Oncorhynchus mykiss

Central Valley steelhead (T) (NMFS)

Oncorhynchus tshawytscha

Central Valley spring-run Chinook salmon (T) (NMFS)

winter-run Chinook salmon, Sacramento River (E) (NMFS)

Amphibians

Rana aurora draytonii

California red-legged frog (T)

Birds

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

bald eagle (T)

Strix occidentalis caurina

northern spotted owl (T)

Candidate Species

Fish

Oncorhynchus tshawytscha

Central Valley fall/late fall-run Chinook salmon (C) (NMFS)

Critical habitat, Central Valley fall/late fall-run Chinook (C) (NMFS)

Key:

- (E) *Endangered* - Listed (in the Federal Register) as being in danger of extinction.
- (T) *Threatened* - Listed as likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.
- (P) *Proposed* - Officially proposed (in the Federal Register) for listing as endangered or threatened.
- (NMFS) Species under the Jurisdiction of the [National Marine Fisheries Service](#). Consult with them directly about these species.

- *Critical Habitat* - Area essential to the conservation of a species.
- (PX) *Proposed Critical Habitat* - The species is already listed. Critical habitat is being proposed for it.
- (C) *Candidate* - Candidate to become a proposed species.
- (X) *Critical Habitat* designated for this species.

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Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office

Federal Endangered and Threatened Species that Occur in or may be Affected by Projects in the GILMORE PEAK (564D) U.S.G.S. 7 1/2 Minute Quad

Database Last Updated: December 1, 2006

Document Number: 061208125844

Species of Concern - The Sacramento Fish and Wildlife Office no longer maintains a list of species of concern. However, various other agencies and organizations maintain lists of at-risk species. These lists provide essential information for land management planning and conservation efforts. See www.fws.gov/sacramento/es/spp_concern.htm for more information and links to these sensitive species lists.

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Listed Species

Invertebrates

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Central Valley steelhead (T) (NMFS)

Amphibians

Rana aurora draytonii

California red-legged frog (T)

Birds

Haliaeetus leucocephalus

bald eagle (T)

Strix occidentalis caurina

northern spotted owl (T)

Candidate Species

Mammals

Martes pennanti

fisher (C)

Key:

- (E) *Endangered* - Listed (in the Federal Register) as being in danger of extinction.
- (T) *Threatened* - Listed as likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future.
- (P) *Proposed* - Officially proposed (in the Federal Register) for listing as endangered or threatened.
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- *Critical Habitat* - Area essential to the conservation of a species.
- (PX) *Proposed Critical Habitat* - The species is already listed. Critical habitat is being proposed for it.
- (C) *Candidate* - Candidate to become a proposed species.
- (X) *Critical Habitat* designated for this species.

Appendix B

Cultural Resources Documentation

Archaeological Project Tracking No. 06-NCAO-434

The proposed preferred alternative to adopt the Fire Management Plan for East Park Reservoir has no potential to affect historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR Part 800.3(a)(1).

Under the terms of the EA for an FMP to be covered, the FMP must not affect properties listed or eligible to be listed in the National Register of Historic Properties.

The actions detailed in the FMP are subject to Section 106 evaluation and the regulations outlined in 36 CFR Part 800. I find the cultural resource portions of the EA adequate for the level of effect.

Location: Reclamation administered lands within East Park Reservoir.

This concludes the Section 106 process for this EA. Please include a copy of this concurrence with the EA file. Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Adam Nickels

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